



THREE FLIGHTS OF A THRUSH

BY MARIE VAN VORST

FLIGHT I.—TO THE ROOFS OF PARIS.

HER name was *Mademoiselle Fauvette*—in English, "Miss Thrush"; and she sang all day long, from morning until night—why, not at all! That is to say, no one ever heard her sing; and if she sang, it was in her heart.

To her English-speaking guests Madame said, "Elo me to praysent my raysident Frainch governess—yes?" And to those who were so fortunate as to dangle more than one language from their tongue's end, and who did not need the services of this young person, Madame said, "*Voilà Mademoiselle*—she will aid you in all your affairs."

Madame was quite truthful: the young person would, and did. Madame Brancard was the proprietress of a large *hôtel de famille*. She had situated it as far from the madding crowd as she dared—in remote Passy—far indeed beyond everything which a misguided tourist might hope to see during a short sojourn in Paris; but short sojourns did not appeal to Madame.

"Passy," she said—"it is healthful; it is at rest."

It certainly was; it was, above all, inaccessible.

"It is well not to compare too often with other establishments," Madame argued; "it brings the discontent. Once arrived and installed, many will remain; it is far to move, and it costs to *déménager*."

People came to the *hôtel de famille* for various reasons, and staid because moving was expensive; and then there were advantages. There were indeed—there was *Mademoiselle Fauvette*! She was always to be found when complaint was on her track. Into her ear all grievances were poured; she listened, and soothed. Knowing it was vain to go to the little bureau of Madame with a complaint, she never went. *Mademoiselle* was paid a salary that amounted to six dollars a month. At first her patroness thought to allow her a percentage on her lessons; then, on turning the scheme over in her mind, she decided on the former course. The salary had not seemed to her a possible sum to offer to any governess, even in France. She did not dream of it until she saw *Mademoiselle Fauvette*, and then it burst upon her like an inspiration. When the girl appeared that first day in the little office before Madame a small dart of light came in from somewhere without in Passy and fell—a bright bar, a clear dividing-line between the two. Madame looked up quickly from her tatting at her *vis-à-vis*, looked up, and made the proposition.

Mademoiselle Fauvette accepted. She was not a woman of the world. She taught thereafter all day long; she had no interests to be considered but those of others, and she helped those who were of the world and its rush to get into the thick of the fight by her prompt punctu-

ality, by her unfailing sweet temper; and if they failed to appreciate her, it was because only the unpleasant things of life are visible to certain retinæ.

Peaceful lessons at more or less regular times in-doors are what is generally understood by teaching. This, however, was not *Mademoiselle Fauvette's* method. She accompanied people who did not know their own minds to dressmakers and milliners; she taught them *en route*; she told them the names of the things they did not know; she assisted at purchases where her good French taste quivered. She selected materials, designed dresses, and often, after spending an hour or two over samples, when silks and stuffs had been unrolled and displayed, after haughty models had paraded up and down in every manner of costume—after all this she would be obliged, at a nudge from her companion, to rise and say to the head of the establishment, "These ladies will not decide on anything to-day"—and then follow "these ladies" out of the door, her cheeks aflame.

But the worst of all was to fight the battles of these difficult shoppers—to return things caprice had ordered; to cavil over bills with angry furnishers and screaming dressmakers. Oh, her cheeks were often aflame for them—for her pupils; for her compatriots with their clever replies; for herself, a miserable tool that durst not turn in the hand. More than once, rather than dispute the *pourboire* with an infuriated cocher, she had slipped one of her own *gros sous* into the man's hand.

"Just you beat him down, Mamselle," her companion would call, hurrying into the shelter of the porte cochère. "Five cents! I can't stand this *pourboire* system!"

At first *Mademoiselle Fauvette* occupied a tiny room next that of Madame; it had a *terrasse* view, and she had been very happy in her miniature quarters. She was no sooner installed with her few possessions than a guest one too many arrived; *Mademoiselle* was forced to move up stairs to a trunk-room on the third floor. But this resting-place was soon discovered to be indispensable for the trunks, and *Mademoiselle Fauvette* went on up stairs, until finally there was nothing left but the servants' quarters, *au sixième*.

"There is, however, no farther that I can go," she thought. "This is the end."

Even the knowledge that in certain countries people sleep on the roofs did not chill the hope of this permanence. It was at least not a French custom.

Mademoiselle Fauvette, being "a good and faithful servant, went up higher" (with no apparent advantage to herself, be it admitted). These last quarters were reached by dirty winding stairs, damp in winter, and intensely cold. When the sixth story shone in sight after the ascent, it shone in the shape of a stone corridor, out of which opened several small rooms. In one of these *Mademoiselle Fauvette* found herself, a certain evening in February. The last bundle of her things and her furnishings had been brought up and dumped. Her little iron bed stood by the wall, mattress and blankets thrown indifferently upon it. A bureau, with drawers naïvely innocent of handles, sagged on two feet in a corner. Her clothes and her few possessions were dropped aimlessly here and there.

She had just come up from giving a lesson—she was tired. She sat down on the edge of the iron bed and looked about her. The paper was peeling here and there from the wall, showing discolored spots, and between the boards of the hard-wood floor great cracks laughed up at her. She did not at this moment respond to their mirth. Through the roof-window burst a flood of sunlight suddenly, fully flaring in *Mademoiselle Fauvette's* eyes. She sprang to her feet and ran to the window, threw open the panes, and leaned out. Below her wound the Seine, blue and swift; on either side the frail branches of the leafless trees, trembling to clothe themselves with spring, moved gently in the delicate atmosphere. Here and there darted the *bateaux mouches*, crowded with those who had gone beyond the bridge's span and the city's noise to St. Cloud and Bas-Meudon. They had been (these happy ones!), and in the evening were flocking back to Paris. Over the gray roofs and chimney-pots lay the *brume mystique*, shot through with light, a palpitating cloud of gold; through the yellow mist the tour Eiffel, fine as the web of a spider, spun upward.

"How beautiful! how beautiful!" murmured little Miss Thrush. "How I shall love this room!"

On the tin roof ledge close to her twittered groups of sparrows, ruffling their feathers, settling down in small brown balls, close, side by side. Birds, but songless. They were so near her she could have touched them; but she was looking out and on to the fading sky. It grew paler, paler. Shadows followed the glowing veil over the roofs and chimney-pots, and as much of night as ever comes to France—a blue sky and fair white stars—found the sparrows gone to sleep, shapeless tufts of feathers, and *Mademoiselle Fauvette*, leaning on her elbows, gazing in rapture out of her window *au sixième*.

FLIGHT II.—TO BATIGNOLLES.

Mademoiselle Fauvette had a friend. Most of us think we have a great many; *Mademoiselle* was sure of one—Mrs. Percival Cecil George Gormsleigh, of Tottenham Gardens, Bruxton Road, Rockshire. *Mademoiselle* had it all in her little address-book. Mrs. Gormsleigh had written it in her all-covering British chirography; it had taken a whole page of the little blue *carnet*. "My dear, when you need a friend, address me *there*," and *Mademoiselle Fauvette* shut the *carnet* as reverently as though it had been a missal with an especial prayer written on the fly-leaf by the Pope's hand. She adored Mrs. Gormsleigh.

Mrs. Gormsleigh read French as she did English (she often affirmed). So, at all events, she spoke it, and was broad enough and generous enough to make as little difference as possible between the two hostile tongues. The conversation on the part of Mrs. Gormsleigh was an impartial literal translation from her own into that most subtle of mediums the French speech; and this without an accent or an inflection other than her own honest rise and fall. It was to *Mademoiselle Fauvette* a new language, which at times resembled her mother-tongue vaguely enough to make her homesick.

The English patrons of the family hotel remarked at once, on seeing Mrs. Gormsleigh,

"Isn't she strikingly like the Queen?"

Mrs. Gormsleigh always seemed, as she sailed grandly into the dining-room to meals, or took her seat in a huge arm-chair in the reading-room, to be presiding over something. Proud of her resemblance to Victoria, she cultivated the type, and the English tourists who had never

remotely glowed in the dimmest halo of aristocracy were proud of Mrs. Gormsleigh: she was a sort of opera-glass that brought the throne nearer them.

She was something of a grass-widow—not of the melancholy type. She accepted her situation with serene calm. Her husband had found out Madame Brancard's family hotel, and Mrs. Gormsleigh had been suddenly left there; all that Mr. Gormsleigh asked, apparently, was the boon of his liberty, and this Mrs. Gormsleigh gave him because she could not help it.

To Madame Brancard she was a goldmine on a small scale. She remained when others came and went. She had a maid and a dog; for these she paid generously; and to judge by the tale of rations that the monthly bill imputed to Mrs. Gormsleigh's Skye terrier, one would have supposed that she kept an ostrich at least.

It was owing to her friend's prestige that *Mademoiselle Fauvette* was permitted to pass what spare time she had in the little salon on the second floor. She drew a breath of contentment when she entered and looked at the big table covered with books and papers, and left its comfort with a sigh.

An economical person respects the wear and tear of inanimate objects, and when it comes to flesh and blood, "does not ride a free horse to death." Madame Brancard had never heard this vulgar proverb, but she knew its spirit, and respected it as she respected all truths that pointed toward her own ultimate good. When, on the day of her engagement with *Mademoiselle Fauvette*, that young person had timidly suggested a Wednesday afternoon *congé*, Madame consented at once.

"You are young," said the maternal soul. "I am responsible for your temptations, in a measure. Where shall you pass your Wednesdays?"

"At Batignolles, Madame, with some friends—*les dames Carrière*. The mother paints miniatures which have been already exposed in the Salon."

"And then?"

"There are the two sisters, *Mademoiselle Claire*, *Mademoiselle Marie*, *et une toute petite*."

"And then?"

"That is all!"

Without appearing to do so, Madame closely observed her governess. Madame,

who could have discerned a maggot in the kernel through the shell, saw straight through this unfolded bud to the heart—neither warmed nor mellowed, and where no worm or canker hid.

"Good!" said Madame (and meant it).

"You will return at five always."

"Why yes, Madame, always."

Thus Batignolles—Batignolles!—rose like a star on the horizon of *Mademoiselle Fauvette*. And what week is impossible, even with six and a half days of unremitting labor and as many days' hours of annoyances, with a whole four hours and a half of bliss planted right down in the middle of the routine! And all that it meant in her starved life she confided to Mrs. Gormsleigh.

Mrs. Gormsleigh's idea of Paris was vast and vague. Morally, she looked upon it as a sink of sin, where an unprotected woman has but to appear, straightway to disappear. Æsthetically, she regarded it as a whirligig assortment of flowers, ruches, ribbons, and general frivolous, delicious brightness, of which she had caught too brief a glimpse. Long ago, as a girl, she bought her wedding things in Paris, and the city had flashed by her in a sunlight of May days. She felt the warmth of certain souvenirs still. She had never known the city or its environs; and quarters whose red and white names flashed from mighty omnibus tops—Buttes, Chaumont, Batignolles, Courcelles—were for her mysterious terminations to which the stages rolled gayly—gardens, woods, or ancient quarters of the city, unspoiled by modern improvements; she had been always "go-in," but the sojourn passed. She married, saw more and less than she ever dreamed, and the various signs (with much else) faded out of sight, borne away by vehicles that never came back.

When at last *Mademoiselle* spoke to her familiarly of Batignolles, the word, with a sort of onomatopœism, suggested a beautiful country place lying Heaven knew where, and to reach which Heaven knew how, and she wove about it the fascination of a fairy-tale.

Mademoiselle had been many times to Batignolles before Mrs. Gormsleigh knew of the existence of this Éden. One day, missing the little governess, she inquired her whereabouts.

"*Mademoiselle* has gone to Batignolles," she was informed.

"Ah!"

Yes, it appeared that Miss Thrush bent a twig to the wind every Wednesday and flew to Batignolles.

It was past six when *Mademoiselle Fauvette* came into the little salon. It was raining without. Miss Thrush, being a little late, had ventured to slip in with her things on.

"Where have you been, my child?"

"Ah, Madame, it is my day for Batignolles."

She drew off her brown worsted gloves (she might have gotten out of the finger-ends quite as easily as at the wrists), and unfastened the brown ribbons of her brown cloak.

"Take your wet things off and change your boots. You shall put on my slippers. Sit by the fire, and tell me all about what you do at Batynole."

The girl did exactly as she was told. She was an independent woman, but she possessed the grace of compliance, and when, with tears in her eyes, she drained a glass of hot water and peppermint, and sat hatless, cloakless, and in her stocking feet before the fire, Mrs. Gormsleigh's heelless slippers dangling from the ends of her toes, her own boots standing up on end to dry, Mrs. Gormsleigh looked at her with satisfaction and felt less alone; and Miss Thrush thrilled with the pleasure of being cared for.

"Now," said Mrs. Gormsleigh, "what do you do at 'Battynole'?"

"Oh, it is the conference of *Monsieur Périgord*."

Mrs. Gormsleigh faithfully read the New York *Herald* and the *Figaro* daily, even the advertisements, but she had never heard of *Monsieur Périgord*, and she said so.

"That does not astonish me," said *Mademoiselle Fauvette*. "He has yet to burst upon the world."

This was enthusiastic, but vague; too ephemeral for Mrs. Gormsleigh. "Battynole" might remain wrapped in the mystery of the unknowable, but *Monsieur Périgord* should assume personality.

"Who is *Monsieur Périgord*?" she asked, with simple directness.

She touched a secret spring. Turning her side face to the fire and facing her pupil, *Mademoiselle Fauvette* clasped the "Art of Conjugation" and a stub pencil.

"He is a great master, a great musician, Madame. In any country but

France, where they do not know the soul of music (*Monsieur Périgord* says), he would have been famous before this. But renown is coming, surely, surely. He gives, twice a week, conferences on musical composition to at least five hundred students in the Latin Quarter. They have a room especially for this lecture. He is speaking now on the 'Development of the Opera,' and, Madame, *he is writing an opera!*" She said this with a hushed voice.

"What does he do at Batynole?" asked Mrs. Gormsleigh.

"Just think, Madame, we have been so fortunate as to secure him for our class! He teaches us!"

"Does he teach you alone?"

"Madame!" breathed the shocked voice. "A great musician does not give single lessons; it is a course!"

"Oh!" said Mrs. Gormsleigh.

"Yes. There are eight of us *jeunes filles*—*les demoiselles Tournier* (the daughters of the wine-merchant), and always *les dames Carrière*, my friends, whose house it is. I teach a little girl of Madame Carrière, and in return I am permitted to assist at this *cours*."

"Well?"

"We each play what we have prepared during the week, and *Monsieur Périgord* criticises,—and—then—he plays."

Mademoiselle Fauvette's face wore the look of a rapt angel; and as she said the name of the great master "*Monsieur Périgord*," she filled it with the warmth and the sun of the Midi, whose name it is, until every syllable shone, and even Mrs. Gormsleigh felt the glow.

"And he plays well, my dear?"

"Well! Oh, Madame, it is a dream, a poem! It is—I know not how to say it—as if all I felt and couldn't speak were said; as if all I see and couldn't have were there."

A little second of silence fell.

"You seem to be very fond of music," said Mrs. Gormsleigh.

"It's my life!"

(Her life, poor little songless thrush—her life!)

"And the opera, Madame—when it is completed it will show to the world what a great genius has been unknown among them."

"When has *Monsieur Périgord* told you all this?" asked the resolute Briton.



"MRS. GORMSLEIGH FAITHFULLY READ THE NEW YORK 'HERALD.'"

(The firelight had warmed slightly the cheek of *Mademoiselle Fauvette* that was nearest the light, but over the other no flush passed, and her eyes looked at her interlocutrice with no quiver of the lids.)

"Oh, from time to time. Sometimes there are only *les dames Carrière* and myself, and after my lesson he will stop for a few moments to talk. They are great friends, *les dames Carrière* and *Monsieur Périgord*."

"And how old is he?"

"Ah, I have no idea!"

"Oh, yes you have, my dear; one always has an idea about people's ages, you know. Is he twenty-five?"

"Oh no, Madame; much more!"

"Seventy?"

"Oh no. Why, one's career is finished at seventy, and *Monsieur Périgord* has not begun his."

"Well, how old *should* you say?" persisted her friend.

"Forty—perhaps," mused *Mademoiselle Fauvette*.

"Is he bald?"

Mademoiselle Fauvette broke into a musical laugh. "I really, really have no idea; I have never noticed."

(If *Monsieur Périgord*, far off in the Latin Quarter, at his desk before five hundred young students, could have heard! He was even at that moment wiping his brow, which extended well back to the crown, innocent of hair.)

"I am afraid," thought Mrs. Gormsleigh, "that it *is* serious."

Monsieur Périgord belonged to his room as absolutely as the red chintz curtains belonged to his bed, as the undulations in the stair-rails belonged to them. He went in with the dinginess and the littleness—the unfinished, stopped-short appearance. As he leaned over his table-top, his nervous hand, coming far below the frayed coat sleeve, rapidly jotting down the notes of his score, or run through the spare thin fringe of hair skirting a spot bald beyond question (Oh, *Mademoiselle Fauvette*!)—as he bent thus, his narrow shoulders close over the table, in the half-light of a Parisian afternoon, the bristling jar of pens and pencils, the big ink-well, the rolls of musicians' black cases, all seemed to possess an individuality akin to the master—dingy, old, useful, but not even at the stretch of a point artistic.

Monsieur Périgord knew the chimney-pots and the gleaming gray roofs, as did his friend in far-away Passy. At the head of his street was the great friendly façade of the Odéon, with its gold letters,

THÉÂTRE NATIONAL.

It patronized, protected, and cheered the narrow rue de—. *Monsieur Périgord*, looking at it, remembered how it had sheltered, fostered, and encouraged art for generations. Dreaming of brilliant final success, feeling to the depths of his gentle soul kin with the beautiful and great, and stretching toward Fame his timid hand, *Monsieur Périgord*, under the shadow of the Théâtre National, composed his opera.

His tri-weekly conference *Monsieur Périgord* found to be, for the most part, weariness of the flesh; it strained and jarred his nerves. He dreaded it, he feared it, but he could not despise it. It was to be his stepping-stone to fame.

From two until four, three times a week, he lectured, with illustrations and the aid of an accompanist, on the "*Histoire de l'Opéra, et l'Art de Composition*," before an audience of five hundred young men, in the Collège Anonyme de Musique. He lectured, indeed, to the primary class, the beginners; but, old or young, stupid or clever, his audience was large; and to see before him a sea of faces, to hear hundreds shuffle into their seats, all for him, all to hear him, to be his and his alone for two hours, was a certain source of pride to the musician. Once, when elaborating a theme so familiar as to slip almost unconsciously from his tongue, he allowed his dream to possess him, and he became a leader, in his imagination, of an orchestra playing his own overture, and the gaping boys were an enthralled audience. The maestro triumphed at last, and the tinkling accompanist's feeble strain swelled to a *crescendo* of stringed instruments. At this point he lost his thread, mumbled, and stopped. Through the room, like a ripple over the still water's face, ran the laughter that is bitter-mead. *Monsieur Périgord* grew crimson, and sick fright took possession of him. By an effort, masterly indeed, he controlled himself, found his discourse, and proceeded. This aberration was never forgotten by the students, who gave him thereupon a new sobriquet, of which he was happily ignorant.

For the subject of his masterpiece he had chosen "The Rape of the Sabines," and in his vacation he spent his time at the National Library, studying scene and setting and historic detail for his *chef-d'œuvre*. Before day broke he was at his table, his hair on end, his small form wrapped in a coverlet from his bed during the *grand froid*. In the intensest moments of creation he flew between piano and table like an excited bird, and at all times bristled with pencils—one sticking in his waistcoat, one behind his ear, and between his teeth another, against which he hummed the air he was elaborating as though it were a mouth-organ.

Into the round of hours of creation, and hours in which he was a martyr for his bread's sake, dropped the conference of Madame Carrière at Batignolles like a pearl between pebbles. No sooner had he left the Latin Quarter, crossed the Seine, ascended the Champs Élysées, and boarded the tram for Batignolles than he left behind him mustiness, dingy poverty, as one who leaves his wonted clothes to don a disguise. Only, in this case, poverty and dinginess were the disguise. Once a week *Monsieur Périgord* became his true self. On the impériale of the tram car (rain or shine, he always took the three-sou seat) he looked into the sky



"I TEACH A LITTLE GIRL."

and down on the passing crowd. Courage and Belief, oozing away at times even under the Odéon's shadow, came back to him. He vibrated with airs from his opera, and as he hummed them they became full of new, exquisite sweetness, full of delicious suggestion. They repeated with fine, poignant insistence that they *were* beautiful, truly beautiful, and would be acknowledged. They told him that he had a future; all this they reiterated until he saw the yellow hand-

bills on the posts of the Opéra, and the placards in the Agence des Théâtres on the avenue de l'Opéra—"The Rape of the Sabines"—and heard the men selling his librettos in the streets. He fairly quivered with ecstasy.

He thus descended, as a rule, before the door of Madame Carrière's little hôtel as one inspired, and entered gayly—head erect, thrown back a little, the purple ribbon ends up, with all the importance that it might hold, his black tie neat and small, under his arm his violin-case, in his hand his black leather serviette. He burst upon the little *bourgeois* conference; he was to them a great person, and to *Mademoiselle Fauvette* the musical genius of the age.

Monsieur Périgord could not have defined his pleasure at the *cours* of Madame Carrière. His audience was limited, and (if the truth must be told) dull to distraction. Madame Carrière, whose forte was miniatures, sat and worked at her art in a frame. She knew enough of music to tolerate it and to provide lessons for her daughter; beyond this she could not have told the "Marseillaise" from the popular air of a *café chantant*. She was a high-voiced, rotund *mère de famille*, and the only miniatures that she had ever produced that faintly suggested a human being were the *demoiselles Carrière*, who were exactly like one another and herself. First, *Mademoiselle Lucie*, the little daughter, played in a frightened and atrocious manner her exercises for the week; then, one by one, the five daughters of the respective butcher, baker, and candlestick-maker rolled off in turn sonatas, waltzes, fugues; *Monsieur Périgord*, standing in the shadow of the big room, a little way from the piano, accompanied on his violin.

At the last *Mademoiselle Fauvette* took the piano-stool, and played, in a sweet and trembling manner, the study which she had never time to prepare. *Monsieur Périgord* followed on his stringed instrument, slowly, painstakingly—so very thoroughly, in fact, that the *bêtes demoiselles*, who had scampered through their allotted portions like goats over fences, decided that *Mademoiselle Fauvette* must possess decided genius, and that *Monsieur Périgord* was carefully developing it. Then all the performers sat expectant, whilst the teacher either gave a little conference, or, as a great, great treat, played snatches

from the "Rape of the Sabines." The hearers sat in the shadows of the early winter twilight in heavy attention. But little Miss Thrush, her arms at length on her knees, her face uplifted, chin raised, and lips parted, her halo of soft fine hair blown about her cheeks like dust of gold, was a lovely thing to see. The others listened, she heard; and *Monsieur Périgord* found the "Rape of the Sabines," Fame, and the Future indescribably blended and linked with the part of his audience that *Mademoiselle Fauvette* formed. He came in enthusiasm, he went away in a dream; and this was the famous conference of *Monsieur Périgord*.

FLIGHT III.—TO ARCADY.

It was spring in Paris. The chestnut-trees bordering the Champs Élysées rose through the mysterious haze like rare growths of ocean flowers in a tremulous sea. The twigs, crimson and fine, were velvet with the presage of bloom. In the flower-markets gleamed out white and pink, lavender and green, in marvellous confusion, and through the remoter streets flashed brilliant spots of yellow and crimson as the venders passed, with their baskets of crocus, giroflée, and red roses.

Monsieur Périgord, spurning the last step of his turret stairs, stepped out to find the narrow rue de — transfigured with the glorious beauty of the day. He looked up suspiciously at the Odéon, as though it might be responsible for the delicious feeling astir in his heart, but the black façade in the bright atmosphere loomed dark and damp; the letters were as cold as though carved from golden ice. The House of Art, even with its symbolic laurels, was a frigid thing in the living day.

Monsieur Périgord turned away his eyes.

It was the famous day when the hedgehog sees its shadow, when under the brown short grass the earth is succulent and moist, when the environs, those blessed Elysians sacred to leisure and fête-days and marriages and betrothals, send on the wings of the wind messages to the heart of Paris—"Come out to us; there are the *bateaux mouches* and the trams (you can take them for three sous!). We are so near and yet so different that you should know us and touch us and take of our good. We are almost wide awake and opening our violet eyes and stirring our



MONSIEUR PÉRIGORD.

warm wind wings in the sun; come out to us!" These messages *Marne la Coquette* and *Garches of the Purple Woods* send in the giroflée and violets in the venders' baskets, in the moist smells from the newly sprinkled pavements.

It was half past nine in the morning. Bareheaded, blue-aproned *bonnes* pattered hither and thither, pausing before a game-seller's or a creamery to choose their good morsels for the day.

A student here and there, *béret* ajaunt,

his portfolio under his cape, passed, swinging along. Down the sun-filled street the musician followed with and passed athwart the throng.

Monsieur Périgord was quivering with excitement. Early and late vigils, succession of mellow days, inspiring rides on the impériale of the omnibus—all these are stimulating influences. The "Rape of the Sabines" from overture to finale was complete! Before seeking a criticism from the directors of the National Opera, it should have a *répétition générale* before an audience of at least five hundred! His suite of lectures upon the "Development of the Opera" had reached the proper climax; he might, in illustration of theory and technique, properly introduce his masterpiece under a pseudonym. The "Rape of the Sabines," rendered by a picked orchestra of six pieces and the tinkling accompanist, was to be produced before his five hundred students at the Institut Anonyme.

Pegasus cannot cleave the ether until he paws at the threshold of Olympus and ploughs at the same time in a bumpkin's field. To say that the routine of lectures, that harmony and thorough-bass, counterpoint and history, had been neglected whilst the *maestro* created his opera is to speak, alas, too truly; and here and there amongst his pupils were those who also had germs of possible operas in their brains, who were modern, serious, progressive, and intolerant. These young men jeered at first, with the rest, at the mystic, *distracted* lecturer. Then they grew silent, sullen, mutinous. Moreover, in the Advanced Course there was a rising man of no creative genius whatsoever, a born imparter of knowledge and a talented augments of his own prestige. He had schemes for the union of the two *cours*—and—! Clouds no bigger than a man's hand were not visible to the near-sighted *Monsieur Périgord*, although they had been peeping above the horizon for months; indeed, to his innocent vision all horizons were clear.

Monsieur Périgord's scrupulous toilet on this festive day belated him a little. His coat was brushed; a new tie cast the older black of his wardrobe into the shade; he drew on a pair of buttonless black gloves, purple at the seams. As he reached the threshold of the Institut Anonyme, his climax of elation and

springiness at its height, he stopped to buy for two sous a boutonnière from a flower-seller, and thrust it in the lapel of his coat, just above the purple ribbon of the chevalier d'honneur. In the cloak-room he left his hat and overcoat, keeping on his gloves, that they might be drawn off with impressive leisure as he entered with his orchestra. His orchestra was awaiting him, however—the violinist, the cellist, and the timid accompanist. The racks were before them, and their scores as well. With a hasty word to each performer and whispered repetitions of directions given at the few private rehearsals already held, *Monsieur Périgord*, standing by his little table, turned his gaze and his face toward the *salle*.

The membership of five hundred seemed to have grown enormously. It appeared to him as though there were gathered at least twice that number; from topmost seat in the gallery to the first row of benches the hall was filled; there was not one vacant chair. Indeed, here and there two men shared the same seat. The amazed and delighted professor saw scattered through the room older students, men from the Cours Supérieur. The room, too, was remarkably silent—if he had realized it, *ominously still*.

Monsieur Périgord, thrilled and ecstatic, drew off his black gloves, the boutonnière trembled above his beating heart; he bowed and smiled and began:

"*Messieurs—*"

(Have you ever heard, on a day that has been strangely, beautifully still, a sudden slow rustling in the far-off trees—a rustling that, growing little by little, steadily creeps, until it possesses all the air and silence is awakened to storm?) From the dim gallery came a gliding, lisping sound, strange and cruel; it broke and rippled and touched over all the rows of seats, gaining in intensity.

Monsieur Périgord, absorbed and unsuspecting, took it at first for applause; he smiled again and bowed.

"*Messieurs—*"

(The trees, stirred from root to fine tree-top, shake, and are filled with sound.) Growing mightily, gaining and overpowering, the hissing, lisping, murmuring, spread and possessed the silence, until none was left—none left for the gentle voice of the author of the "Rape of the Sabines" to be heard.

"Silence, gentlemen! I command silence!"
(Silence!)

The sound which had had no form took mould here and became words:

"*La dé-mis-sion de Mon-sieur Pé-ri-gord.—la dé-mis-sion de Mon-sieur Pé-ri-gord,—la dé-mis-sion de Mon-sieur Pé-ri-gord—*"

Slowly, rhythmically measured, each word and each syllable being clapped to time and precision by seven hundred pairs of hands—"*La dé-mis-sion de Mon-sieur Pé-ri-gord*"—until silence was nowhere in the vast dreadful room, save deep in the heart of the stricken man, who stood and stared and listened. There was a still corner of his mind where a voice rang with dreadful fatality, saying, "*This is the end; this is the end forever.*" The sea of faces took awful shapes that were only half human—gargoyles from whose ghoul-ish mouths issued streams of hissing sound:

"*La dé-mis-sion de Mon-sieur Pé-ri-gord—*"

Clap — clap — clap.

The polite and exquisite demeanor of the dismissed professor never



"HE DREW ON A PAIR OF BUTTONLESS BLACK GLOVES."

changed; he stood rigid by his table, his hand clutching the edge. His face was pale as death at first; then, under the humiliation, grew redder and redder; from the edge of his cheek over his bald crown

In the spring, in company with the wanton lapwing, *Mademoiselle Fauvette* got herself another crest, and in fellowship with her namesake—Thrush—new plumage. She always had a new dress

once a year. And if there is a person so poor, so heart-sick, who during April and May does not yearn over the temptation to possess himself of a brilliant bit of newness, who does not fall into a delicious bit of extravagance, that person is not in tune with nature, or in harmony with the renewing year.

Miss Thrush had no time to linger over the bewitching *nouveautés de saison* at the Bon Marché and the Louvre; but when one of her companions, an inveterate but wavering shopper, hesitated, lost in the toils of half a hundred remnants, *Mademoiselle* saw "her affair" in a twinkling. Knowing just how much she could spend, just how much goods it would take, having only one dress to plan where the inveterate shopper had ten, her spring shopping was brief and to the point. She saw and seized upon her remnant. It was bought and paid for and in her arms, and she was helping the wavering purchaser to reconcile yards and metres, and francs and dollars, to the best of her broken English and with her most bewitching gestures. In spite

of the fact that she had no time to try on her dress, that all she could do was to make a sketch of an attractive gown and mail it to a cheap dressmaker, in spite of the fact that it was not silk-lined, or trimmed at all, the spring dress



THE SPRING DRESS.

the flaming wave crept. He strove to speak, and clutched at the edge of the table to keep himself from falling. Then he stretched out his hands to the crowded room, and going backward slowly, slowly retired from the platform.

of *Mademoiselle Fauvette* was a ravishing toilet; and her hat, created by candle-light in her atelier *au sixième*, was a work of art! So, when *Mademoiselle Fauvette* slipped in one day to the second déjeuner, as she took her seat she met each eye fixed upon her. Of course she blushed, looked down at her omelet and up again at the observers, looked around in great confusion, and was more charming than ever. Then she started (as was her custom and duty) "French conversation."

It was Wednesday, the *Monsieur Périgord's* conference; she wore the expectation like a bright jewel, and shone the one brilliant thing in the *hôtel de famille*. Still, "the messages" with sweet impartiality had penetrated even here, but with what they said to the commonplace pensionnaires we have not to do. To *Mademoiselle Fauvette* they opened the heart of their discourse, and as she rose from the table and passed out of the pensionnat into the street, St. Martin's day recklessly told her all its secrets. Taking Miss Thrush for a newly returned bird of passage in gay plumage, wind and flower-breath straight from the Bois de Boulogne met her *en route*, played with the garniture of her hat, lifted the corner of her light cloth cape, found the fine hair irresistible. Still more kin to the wanton lapwing, *Mademoiselle* fairly flew along the street, revelled in that which she did not understand, and which she did but exquisitely feel. Her cheeks grew softly redder; her eyes were as velvet as the violets of *Garches*; her breast rose and fell tumultuously against the pretty folds of her new dress. She was hurrying along, and humming a phrase from "The Rape of the Sabines"—

*"Dans mon pays
Il y a tant de fleurs."*

If on the warm palpitating wing she had then flown straight to those environs that were calling all Paris, the woods would have held her, claimed her, for a bright-winged companion—a bird or spirit of the spring.

The secrets of St. Martin have an affinity with all precious and tender things. They have no direct words; form is fatal to them; they disappear at attempted expression as frost forms under sun.

Of no call to Bas-Mendon or chestnut woods was *Mademoiselle Fauvette* con-

scious. She only knew she was on the way to Batignolles, and it was enough!

As she left Passy, the telegraph-boy entered the pension with a "*petit bleu*" to *Mademoiselle Fauvette*, saying, "There will be no conference to-day."

The messenger and *Mademoiselle Fauvette* passed each other with perfect unconsciousness!

Once at Batignolles, *Mademoiselle* hurried through the small garden to the little house in the rear, the private *hôtel* of *Madame Carrière*. This two-storied red and yellow brick cottage, with a front yard of brown dried garden, and all in sight of the lumbering tram, within shriek of the sharp steam-whistle—*this* was the fairy "*Battynole*" of Mrs. Gormsleigh's dream!

Mademoiselle Fauvette tinkled the bell, and after a longer pause than usual the *bonne* came to the door. She had evidently been cleaning, and was not in full Wednesday-afternoon dress.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she said, by way of greeting, "and *Mademoiselle!* as well. It is then that *Mademoiselle* has not received the telegram?"

"No," said *Mademoiselle*, a little pale; "what telegram?"

"I pray that *Mademoiselle* will give herself the trouble to come in," urged the maid. "It is that *Madame* has been called away—the death of an old aunt in Touraine. It was so sudden; poor *Madame* is desolate!"

Mademoiselle was also desolate—for her friend, for the sudden sorrow, and for the conference that was not to be. This she did not say, however. She looked up the narrow stairway leading to the music-room.

"I think," she said, "that I will go up to the atelier and practise a little on *Madame's* piano, which she will surely permit?"

"Oh, but certainly, *Mademoiselle*," acquiesced the *bonne*; "and, curiously, it is also *Monsieur Périgord* who is above; he too has not received the despatch; it is very extraordinary."

Mademoiselle was on the stairs.

"*Monsieur Périgord?*" she asked, in a hushed voice.

"*Oui, Mademoiselle.*"

"I will get my music that I have left and go back to Passy."

The bell below summoned the genial *bonne* to her cuisine. "*Pardon,*" she

murmured, and was gone, and *Mademoiselle* went slowly up the stairs.

No conference being expected, none was prepared for. The blinds were shut in, the room was dark, and *Monsieur Périgord* would of course be gone by this. *Mademoiselle* was in the middle of the room before she perceived, in a corner, among the shadows, the darkest shadow of them all, *Monsieur Périgord*, lost in the depths of Madame Carrière's arm-chair, his head buried in his hands.

"*Monsieur Périgord!*"

Silently he uncovered his face and, without speaking, rose to his feet.

"*Monsieur Périgord,*" stammered the young girl, "you are ill."

The horrible noises still ringing in his ears, the shock he had just undergone, combined with weeks of fatigue and insufficient nourishment, had completely unnerved the musician. Into a world of false horror the presence of this sweet young being came, and her voice broke the spell. Unable to answer her, yet more truly a man than a sentimentalist, he made no theatrical exhibition, but turned from her, went over to one of the closed windows, drew aside the curtain, and pretended to look into the garden.

The French girl was too *fine* to feel herself *de trop*. She unrolled her music, laid the sheets one by one on the piano, lifted the lid, sat down before the keys. She did not touch them, however, and in a few moments *Monsieur Périgord* had mastered himself. He turned around and came toward his pupil, and the light he had admitted into the atelier showed him so wan and old, his face so full of emotion, that Miss Thrush trembled.

"*Monsieur,*" she said, clasping her hands, "don't tell me. Is it—is it that the opera, 'The Rape of the Sabines,' has been refused, condemned?" She rose in her excitement.

"Dear young lady," said the composer, in a voice which even he found unreal, "let us never speak the word again. It is finished—all over forever. I have reached the end. I have been mad," he said, violently; "I dreamed of success and of fame; I am a *pauvre imbécile—un imbécile*," he repeated. "It is finished!"

The gentle eyes of *Mademoiselle Fauvette* dilated with sympathy and interest.

"Dear master," she said, clasping her hands, "the opera, it is not appreciated?"

He made a despairing gesture with his hands—that were still clad in the black gloves. "That humility is yet spared me, and that alone. I am disgraced; I have lost my position; I have lost everything; I have been dismissed from my class."

An expression of intense relief flashed into the face of his hearer, but in his misery he did not observe it.

"It is *not* the opera, then!" she broke in. "'The Rape of the Sabines' has not been refused? How glad I am!"

He looked at her in great astonishment.

"But, my dear young lady, it is far, far more serious."

"Can you tell me of your trouble?" asked the girl, gently.

Without direct reply, *Monsieur Périgord* sank again into the vast arm-chair which had been late his seat of despair. *Mademoiselle Fauvette* forthwith took the piano-stool, leaning her elbows upon the keys. The *maestro* bent forward, his arms on his knees. With his three fingers of hair standing up around the bald crown of his devoted head, his white boutonnière quite withered and drooping from the button-hole above the knot of the *chevalier d'honneur*, *Monsieur Périgord* told the story of the last few hours. He took a fierce interest in it, and as he saw it come forth in speech he blamed himself; he saw it in its true light, and he spoke of the defection with pain and bitterness, but cast no excuse for himself into the scale. It soothed him even in the telling. The humiliation, the disgrace, grew easier to bear, told to this quiet audience, this lovely listener, who listened with parted lips and intent eyes, as she had ever done when he spoke or played.

"And afterward I could not go back to my apartment. I came here to be alone and to think."

Mademoiselle's face was not one of pity. Indeed, as he paused, he looked at her in surprise, and a pang of pain shot across his heart.

(It was nothing, then, to this light-hearted girl; he had shown his bleeding heart to a stranger.)

"And it is this," she asked—"it is this that makes you so *désolé*, *Monsieur Périgord*?"

"But you understand!" he said. "It is the end of my career."

"On the contrary," nodded the audience, smiling, "it is the beginning!"

She removed her elbows from the piano keys and clasped her hands in her lap. "You are now free to pursue your noble work. You can now give all your time to your talent and compose beautiful things. As for the *conference*," she said, with a superb gesture of dismissal, "what is the verdict of a handful of students who are too *bête* to know that a genius is among them? You were not born to *teach*, but to *create*."

"You are too kind, too generous," he stammered, staring at her; "you do not understand."

"*They* did not understand," she nodded again. "It is not the people whom we are with all the time who know us best," she went on, with a pretty gesture. "I do not pity you at all; I am glad, glad! For *them* I am sorry, but not for you. One pities the mole, not the sun." She stopped, abashed, crimson.

Monsieur Périgord, fascinated, had risen, and the reflection of her own flush was stealing into his pale cheeks.

"You are too good," he could only stammer—"too good!"

She recovered herself. "What you have worked upon for two years—the opera (not your lectures to the students)—is your career. When I came to-day and saw you so miserably unhappy, I said to myself, 'It is a failure, "The Rape of the Sabines,"'; and when you said no, I could not think of anything else, I was so glad."

"You think, then," he murmured, his whole expression changed, his eyes brightening—"you think, then, it is a little good, my opera—that there is something in it?"

"Oh, how can you ask?" exclaimed *Mademoiselle Fauvette*. "It is so beautiful, so beautiful, that which you have played for us."

She turned on the piano-stool and ran her fingers over the keys, and into the air of the song that had been on her lips all day and in her heart:

*Dans mon pays
Il y a tant de fleurs.*

The enchanted composer drew near. The treble was simple enough, but the complication of the bass began to baffle the amateur. Beating time and gently humming the tune, he played the chords with one hand himself.

"Yes, that is it, but no, the *do*, the *sol*, very good!"

"*Veux tu venir—veux tu venir.*"

Thus, little by little, falling into the music so familiar and so dear to him, *Monsieur Périgord* began to play the principal aria of "The Rape of the Sabines." Slipping away from his side unobserved, *Mademoiselle* took the *fauteuil d'orchestre*—or, in other words, the big arm-chair—leaving the piano to the *maestro*. She remained spellbound until *Monsieur Périgord* had wept out all his grief, sighed toward all his goals, and pleaded for that which neither of them fully understood. The last chords vibrated into silence; he remained for a moment immovable, and then he turned. His listener left her chair and came silently toward him. *Mademoiselle Fauvette*, thrilled by what was to her the music of a great genius, looked at the creator of "The Rape of the Sabines." She did not see the faded boutonnière, the frayed, shabby dress, the little, insignificant figure, but that which she *did* see filled her eyes as with a beautiful light, and parted her lips with a heavenly smile—the Spirit of Spring and the Spirit of Music folded their delicious wings over the little composer; the messages of St. Martin's day clamored in his ears—an intoxicating melody. He caught his breath.

The strains of "*Veux tu venir*" rang their changes with the calls of distant Arcadys. *Monsieur Périgord* trembled and held out both his hands.

"*Jeanne*," he said, "*Jeanne, je vous aime.*"

A little later, the day, having brought about, with other good happenings (and some catastrophes, no doubt!), the loves of birds all through the woods, and this mating of *Monsieur Périgord* with *Mademoiselle Fauvette*, stopped spinning its bright flower wheel, and the rain fell in showers, through which the sun shone.

Out from the hôtel of Madame Carrière into the sun-shot shower came two figures, sheltered under a decrepit umbrella borrowed from the *bonne*. They wandered slowly through the garden, out of the gate, and paused by the tram line. In a few moments the lumbering vehicle came in sight, drew near, and stopped. They boarded it, struggled on to the im-

périale, where they sat under one umbrella side by side. The tram car gave a shrill toot, creaked, and started on.

Whither? Not toward Passy, for in their abstraction they had taken the wrong omnibus! But on it started, under a sky delicately blue and gray, into the fine effulgent vista of avenue bordered by

half-blooming trees. On it rolled toward one of those delightful environs haloed by the charm of Mrs. Gormsleigh's dreams, bound for a destination she, poor soul, would never see; for those Arcadys toward which all vehicles go and all ships sail are only reached by the Pilgrims of Love.



Shelton